46. Suggestions for the improvement of Punja cultivation.

Mr. Chandi Thomas (Member, Ambalapuzha taluk) represented that, owing to the lack of State encouragement to the cultivators of *punja* lands, the output of paddy was inadequate to meet the requirements of the State, and that this defect could be remedied by improving the cultivation of such lands. He then submitted the following proposals concerning the improvement of *punja* cultivation, for the consideration of Government :—

(1) Irrigation Boards might be established, the cost thereof being met by the Government without imposing any additional tax on the ryots, who were already overburdened in that direction on account of the payment of *taravila* and land tax for the reclaimed portions of the Vembanad backwater, etc. He pointed out that, in Nanjanad, Government levied taxes on account of such boards only after spending lakhs and lakhs of rupees for their benefit and that here the Government were not conferring similar boons on the people of Kuttanad. The Member therefore requested that the *punja* cultivators of Kuttanad might not be further burdened with tax for the upkeep of the proposed Irrigation Boards.

(2) An Irrigation Officer might be appointed with head-quarters in the centre of Kuttanad to control the boards so that practical benefit might accrue from those institutions.

(3) Kuttanad, which is peculiarly situated, might be constituted into a separate taluk for administrative convenience.

(4) The *punja* caltivators of Kuttanad might be allowed to return a member to the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

(5) A Central Experimental Paddy Farm might be opened in Kuttanad with branches thereof in different parts of the locality. An agricultural school might also be opened to educate *punja* ryots in the methods of scientific cultivation.

(6) The auction sale of lime-shells as a State monopoly might be abolished as the increased price of quicklime manure prejudicially affected the ryots of Kuttanad in the matter of *punja* cultivation.

(7) Arrangements might be made to distribute leaflets and deliver public lectures to paddy cultivators concerning the methods of eradicating plant pests peculiar to Kuttanad.

(8) The water-ways might be cleared of silt and deepened, thereby facilitating the flow in rivers.

(9) Greater facilities might be afforded for the transport of pumping engines, seeds, manures, etc., by widening narrow canals and by opening fresh ones wherever necessary.

(10) More places might be reserved for the growth of bamboos and shrubs which were indispensable for *punja* cultivation.

President's reply.—The report received from the Land Revenue Commissioner says that, at a conference held in January last at Alleppey in which the Dewan Peishkars of Kottayam and Quilon were present, it was resolved that Irrigation Boards were necessary, but that no cess should be levied. A sub-committee was also appointed for examining the draft rules. The time allowed for the submission of the sub-committee's report expires by the end of this month. After the receipt of the sub-committee's report and those of the Dewan Peishkars, the Land Revenue Commissioner will address the Government. The representation of the Member in regard to the levy of cess will be duly considered along with the above reports as soon as the Land Revenue Commissioner's proposals are received. The Member's objection to the auction sale of the right to collect lime-shell and his suggestions for the opening of Experimental Farms, the publication of leaflets, the delivery of lectures, the eradication of pests, the opening and deepening of canals and the nomination of a member from among the Kuttanad ryots to the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly are noted.

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